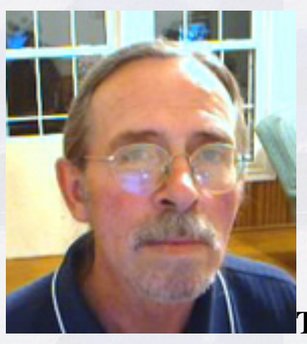
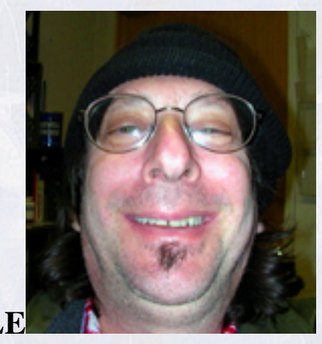
A GARLAND FOR GURU DON JAMES

offered by his disciple, Bobby Meizer



THE GURU

THE DISCIPLE



This short sutra came about as a result of an email correspondence I had with Don James. Don does not consider it a representation of his teaching, and does not endorse it, nor does he endorse me as his disciple. Nonetheless, I certainly consider that I have learned much from him, for which I offer my sincere thanks.
—Robert P. Meizer

1. All we have in a written forum like an elist is people's words. We can try to guess at all the things that their nonverbal cues (tone of voice, expression, body language) would tell us, but in the end it's our guess and might reveal far more about us than about them.

2. Criticism can be motivated by love or malice or neither, and if the person criticized benefits from it or is hurt by it isn't necessarily related to what motivated it.

3. I'm quite willing to admit that the way things seem to me isn't necessarily the way things are.

4. The inner and the outer seem indissolubly connected to me.

5. Having a guru might help with the inquiry or it might not. An earnest disciple will get further even with a phony guru than a phony disciple will get even with an 'attained' guru.

6. If everything is as God wills, then the meanness and abusiveness are as God wills. One still has to face the consequences when one is mean or abusive; they can't be evaded by "God made me do it" or something like that, but still, it's all part of the equation and necessary for some purpose, if only to teach us not to keep doing it.

7. What I mean by duality is something like "part of the world of pairs of opposites", which starts off with the basic dualities of existence/nonexistence, conscious/unconscious, and self/other. By that token if we can talk about it it's dualistic, only the ineffable undefinable 'absolute' is other than dualistic (and even saying that is still part of this dualistic world).

8. I know it sounds corny, but I truly think everyone is absolutely enlightened. At the same time everyone consciously human dwells in the relativity of dualistic consciousness as well.

9. Enlightenment doesn't rule out being selfish, cynical, or tyrannical. It also doesn't rule out being opposed.

10. I've experienced too many changes of "reality" to think that it's anything other than provisional.

11. If it's "my" reality, it's provisional. If it's "reality", it's not mine.

12. OK, here's my provisional take on what awakening is. Every human being without exception is at core a spark of the divine, whether you call it Atman, Brahman, God, the "dimensionless point of awareness" (ala Nisargadatta), or whatever, is of no consequence. That's why everyone is awakened in my opinion. Minds vary in how many barriers there are between that divine spark and the conscious apprehension of it, but no one is completely cut off from it and no consciousness can completely comprehend it (it is both nothing and everything, after all), whatever some gurus may believe about their own perfect comprehension of the universe.

13. The way I see it: there's one big universe that we are all in, but we can't consciously know it directly, so we are all in our own conscious universes, but there is more or less overlap depending on how the way we each perceive the "big universe" meshes.

14. I think "objectivity" is impossible, hence pointless to claim. All knowing by an individual is necessarily subjective. And the judgement as to how well our subjective perception matches up to the "objective" reality is also subjective. That doesn't mean the judgement is not worth making; I think it definitely is, but that's why I consider all my judgements provisional. One can never know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, one can just do one's best at any given time.

15. I initially came to the nondualist elists with the consciousness that they were a place where I could burn out my desires for philosophical certitude, where I could devalue the relevance of intellect to actual realization, where I could watch mind struggle with reality, and I must say that it worked quite well. The emptiness of ideas of realization eventually becomes quite apparent when one immerses oneself in them.

16. Without making any judgements on how others live their lives, I recognize that the traditional teaching paradigm of guru/chela is inappropriate for me. I have no shingle to hang, only questions to share. Do you exist? Are you aware? That's all anyone needs to answer.

17. Enlightenment is timeless. What people usually want to talk about is the biographical details of individuals who are in touch with it. No blame attaches to that, but don't confuse it with talking about what can't be said.

18. Reality is never temporary. The experience that most people call reality is always temporary. In that sense, "experiences of reality" are generally temporary in the sense that the transient individual that "experiences" usually remains, and permanent in the sense that the transient individuals are never the same again, hard as they may try to be.

19. Every person is unique, and their experiences will vary widely. The same holds true for experiences around "enlightenment". The really important part is incommunicable in any ordinary sense.

20. It's difficult to conceive of how complicated it really is. We aren't on one ladder, we're on thousands of them, and you might be a rung above me on one and two thousand above on another, while you and me and billions of others are all crowded together onto the same rung of yet another. And there isn't even one "spiritual" ladder, but at least ten that I can think of. In addition, people don't just go up a ladder one rung at a time. Sometimes they go down, occasionally even all at once. "Enlightenment" by the way, isn't situated at the top or bottom of any ladder.

21. I see the educational and socialization levels as where the real changes take place. How we raise our kids is more important in determining the future than anything else.

22. People are going to keep having a variety of "spiritual experiences", nothing will change that. What could change is that seekers might stop taking these experiences for reality any more than they take their "mundane experiences" for reality.

23. Enlightenment isn't potential. It's always and forever actual. The "realization" of it by a mind does vary.

24. Letting people think nonsense is one thing. Confirming that nonsense for them is another.

25. I feel that everyone is deluded, but perhaps that's my delusion.

26. The mental part is never worked out well when it gets in the way of the enlightenment, no matter how well thought out it is. Conversely, the mental part is never a problem if it isn't getting in the way of enlightenment, no matter how silly or irrational it may be.

27. You are the final arbiter of your own experience, and your own experience is the only touchstone by which to make your arbitration. The same holds true for me, and for every other consciousness, as far as I know.

28. Every experience changes us forever, but in most cases almost imperceptibly. Some experiences have more radical results, but just because an experience is especially intense and transformative doesn't mean it isn't an experience. Experience is fine as far as it goes. So is knowledge based on experience. But they don't go beyond experience.

29. It's a delusion to think that as an individual you are superior to any other individual because we are all as superior as one can get. We're each everything looking at itself.

30. There are states, all of which connect in one way or another with the material world, and then there is enlightenment which can be fully expressed in individuals who are in any or every state from coma to superconscious. But perhaps it is preferable to understand it as a state unattached to states.

31. Anyone can connect with "divine teaching" at any time or place if they truly desire it. Of course one connects from wherever one is. The "ascended gurus", if you will, employ whatever means are at their disposal. So the "transmission" is liable to happen by a wide variety of means. Most often perhaps it happens with a human teacher and human student, but it can easily happen in other human interactions. In my universe the gurus can act through people who have no conscious awareness of their participation in the transmission. But it doesn't even have to be individuals doing the transmitting, sounds of the air moving, glimpses of street signs or license plates, the gurus whispering in your ear. We're all connected all the time. It's a question of what stations we're tuned to. This for me is not postulation, but something I believe I've experienced. Gluttons for biographical detail might prefer it explained this way: about nine years ago I spontaneously entered an altered state of consciousness in which the inner significance of all outer events suddenly became crystal clear, first to my terror and abasement, but finally to my profound peace and happiness. That state lasted at its most intense around three weeks, but it's remained a presence in my life ever since.

32. Some people won't hear something unless it's given to them angrily, but a sage's anger flares for only as long as it's useful and leaves no burnmarks--on the sage, that is.

33. I have never met anyone who was not my guru. I have also never met anyone who was not my disciple. I'm just lucky that way.

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